

News From The States

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS TODAY

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By [Elisha Brown](#)



*U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson, (R-Louisiana), was senior legal counsel for the Christian right law firm Alliance Defending Freedom from 2002 to 2010.
(Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images)*

The legal advocacy group Alliance Defending Freedom is at the forefront of conservative causes, chiefly the movements to restrict abortion and LGBTQ+ rights.

Lawyers for ADF successfully argued 15 crucial cases before the U.S. Supreme Court. Notable outcomes have led to the erosion of abortion access and allowed corporations to deny employees birth control or refuse to serve gay people, our national desk's [Sofia Resnick reports](#).

First founded in the early 1990s, the nonprofit has grown into a nearly [\\$100 million organization](#) with about 100 staff attorneys and 5,000 in its [network](#). Former President and CEO Michael Farris [earned](#) more than half a million dollars in 2021, according to federal tax records.

Intern and job applicants to the group must [agree to a set of doctrines](#) that say “each person is born with an immutable biological sex” reflecting God’s image and marriage is between a man and a woman.

ADF’s power extends far beyond the courts. The group has [trained](#) and employed thousands of conservative Christians who hold parallel worldviews. **Mike Johnson**, the organization’s former senior legal counsel from 2002 to 2010, is now the U.S. House speaker. Johnson is a Republican with a well-documented [history](#) of anti-abortion sentiments. Some of ADF’s trainees have clerked for Justices Samuel Alito — he wrote the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* opinion — and Amy Coney Barrett, the [New Yorker](#) reports.

“They know that their ideology is unpopular, and in many cases, anti-equality or even downright unconstitutional,” Andrew L. Seidel, a constitutional attorney and Americans United for the Separation of Church and State’s vice president of strategic communications, told States Newsroom.

Alliance Defending Freedom continues to be involved in high-profile cases before the nation’s top court. Supreme Court justices may weigh in on lawsuits that could upend [medication abortion](#) access, revoke the federal right to [emergency abortion care in Idaho](#) and overturn Washington’s [conversion therapy ban](#) for minors. In the states, the legal firm is also working on nearly a dozen lawsuits related to [abortion and contraception](#).

ADF President and CEO Kristen Waggoner is at the top of a wish list of potential future Supreme Court nominees. [American Family Association](#), a religious right group that publishes the biblical worldviews of such judicial candidates, is vouching for Waggoner to join the country’s top bench.

“They are trying to build up these networks to capture the courts, to capture the legal professions. Because they can’t win otherwise,” Seidel said.

THE BEAT *States Newsroom coverage*

Pregnant Kentucky woman sues state over abortion bans as Texas case remains undecided



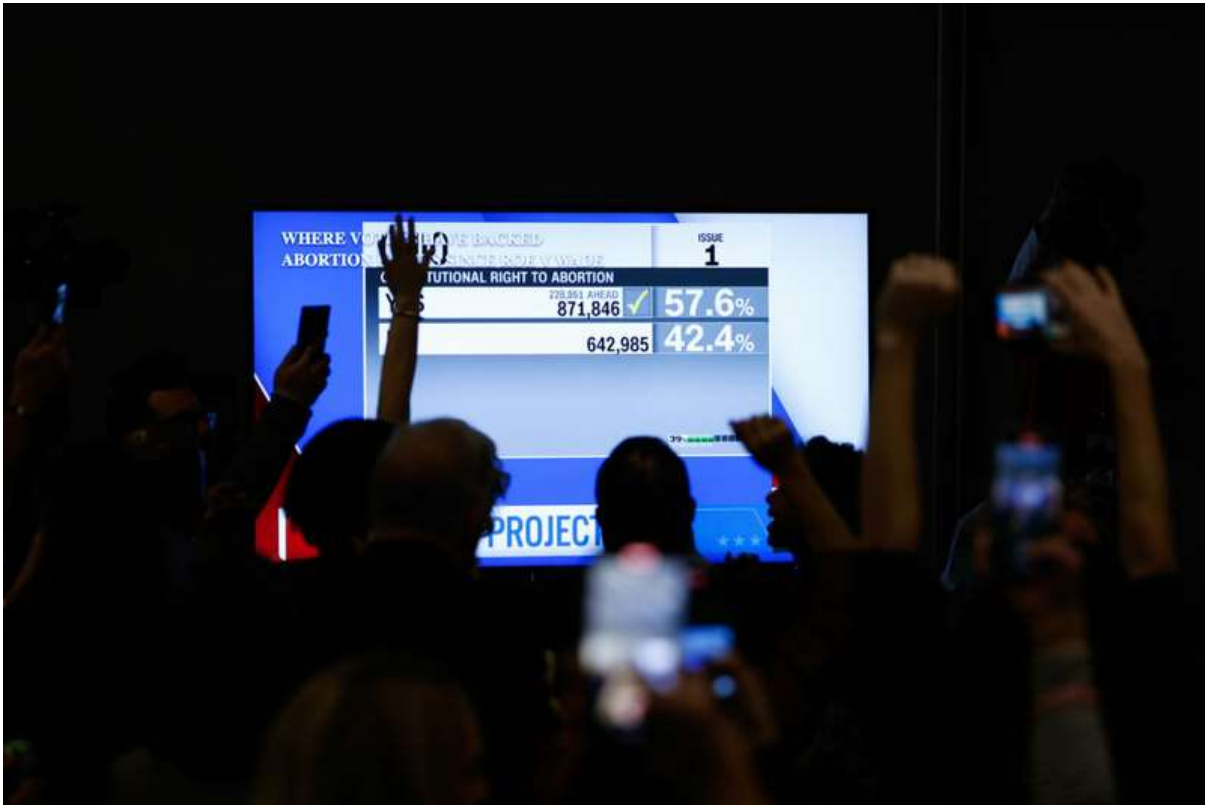
*Pregnant women in Kentucky and Texas are suing over their states' abortion restrictions.
(Deborah Yetter/Kentucky Lantern)*

A woman who is eight weeks pregnant is suing Kentucky Attorney General Daniel Cameron and four other top officials over the state's abortion bans, [Kentucky Lantern](#) reports. The commonwealth has a trigger ban that took effect after the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade last year and a six-week ban that lacks exceptions for rape and incest.

"I am angry that now that I am pregnant and do not want to be, the government is interfering in my private matters and blocking me from having an abortion," the woman, who filed the lawsuit under the name Jane Doe, said in a statement. Planned Parenthood's Kentucky affiliate is also a plaintiff in the case and both are represented by the American Civil Liberties Union.

The [lawsuit](#) was filed Friday, less than a week after a pregnant Texas woman sued the state for an emergency abortion. A district judge ruled that Kate Cox, who has a nonviable pregnancy, could have an abortion, [Texas Tribune](#) reports. The judge said her doctor should be protected from prosecution. But the Texas Supreme Court [temporarily halted the lower court ruling](#) on Friday night after Republican Attorney General Ken Paxton asked the high court to [intervene](#) and stop Cox from getting an abortion. Paxton sent a [warning letter](#) Thursday to three hospitals where Cox's OB-GYN has admitting privileges, arguing the court order doesn't shield the physician from charges, among other accusations.

Ohio abortion providers await guidance after Issue 1 takes effect



*The Ohio Constitution now protects reproductive rights. But physicians are concerned about getting unbiased guidance from the state medical board, which contains an anti-abortion member.
(Graham Stokes/Ohio Capital Journal)*

The reproductive rights amendment most Ohio voters approved last month took effect on Thursday, [Ohio Capital Journal](#) reports. **Abortion access and other rights — childbirth, birth control, fertility treatments and miscarriage care — are protected in the state constitution.** But a lawsuit over a blocked six-week ban is still lodged in the courts. “Some restrictions will get litigated, and others will simply be ignored,” said Steven Steinglass, a constitutional law professor and dean emeritus of the Cleveland State University College of Law.

Steinglass said **the amendment is “self-executing,” regardless of any action from the legislature or the courts.** As for the future of abortion care, providers hope Republican Attorney General Dave Yost will offer guidance to medical licensing boards. But they **are concerned about getting advice from the State Medical Board of Ohio, because state Right to Life President Mike Gonidakis is a member.** “We can not count on those people to be objective when it comes to these new laws,” Dr. Marcela Azevedo, a leader from Ohio Physicians for Reproductive Rights, told the Capital-Journal.

Pennsylvania Medicaid program considers expanding doula care

Health officials in Pennsylvania recently discussed ways to expand doula care. The state doesn’t currently cover doulas under Medicaid, but the Office of Medical Assistance Programs

has joined forces with the **Pennsylvania Doula Commission** to help certify professional doulas. **The nonprofit is offering financial assistance to cover the costs of state certification through the end of the year.**

[Pennsylvania Capital-Star](#) reports that the Department of Human Services is also working with managed care organizations to examine the costs of doula services and the **possibility of Medicaid reimbursements for the birth work**. The state expanded postpartum Medicaid coverage from two months to a year in 2021, and the extension took effect April 2022.

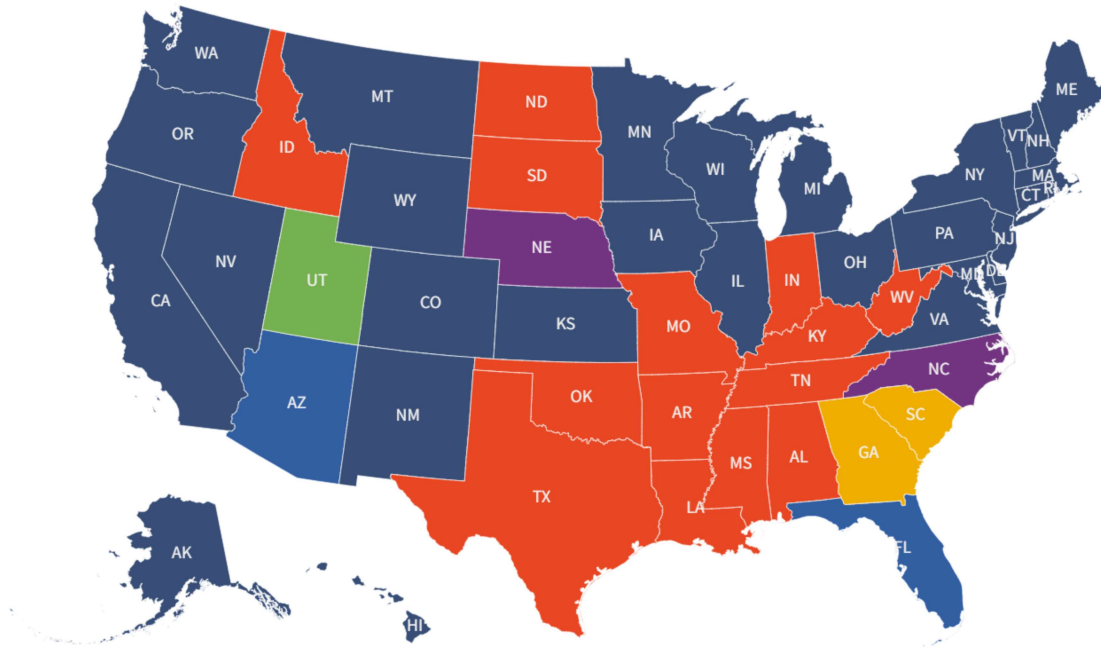
THE PULL *Commentary from Virginia*

“After their victory, Democrats proposed a constitutional amendment to enshrine abortion access as a fundamental right in Virginia. It will take at least two years for that measure to potentially be brought to voters in a referendum; Virginians would do well to use that time to reflect on the necessity and nuance of abortion access, with the somber recognition that if our mothers, sisters, daughters, relatives and friends need an abortion to save their life or health, they can still get one — unlike many of our fellow Americans, in Texas and elsewhere, who don’t have that right, and whose lives often depend on it.” — **Samantha Willis**, commentary and deputy editor, [Virginia Mercury](#).

THE PULSE *Reproductive rights news across the country*

- A Kentucky child has died and a Missouri infant has brain damage after infections from a bacteria that led to a baby formula recall last year. ([Associated Press](#))
- Congressional leaders dropped anti-abortion provisions from the annual defense authorization bill. ([Military Times](#))
- Nearly 1 in 5 abortion patients traveled out of state for care during the first half of 2023, according to the Guttmacher Institute. ([ABC News](#))
- Two trans people reflect on giving birth and the discrimination they faced. ([The 19th*](#))
- Television producer Norman Lear, who died last week at the age of 101, sent shockwaves through America when his show “Maude” ran an episode about abortion in 1972. ([The Washington Post](#))

STATE BY STATE *Abortion access in the U.S.*



Open this interactive map in your browser

Track state-level developments on reproductive rights anytime at [News From The States](#). Send tips and thoughts to ebrown@statesnewsroom.com, and follow her on Twitter [@elishacbrown](#).

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